

Action Center

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activities. Then, if an adult is not eligible for a specific therapeutic program, such as those offered by United Cerebral Palsy or Rochester Area Multiple Sclerosis (RAMS), the fun may be over — even for those people with families.

"Parents are often the least able to cope with disabled adult children," Carlson explained. "Often the disabled child was the youngest, and the parents have become less and less able to transport them and handle them."

At the Action Center, persons with virtually any kind or degree of disability are welcome — amputees, people with brain or spinal cord injuries, those who have cardiac conditions, the visually or hearing impaired, and people who are emotionally disturbed — anyone who can get along with others socially.

One of the advantages of such a diverse group is that participants can help one another. Of the center's 19 volunteers, nearly half are disabled in some way. "It's good for their self-esteem to be able to do something for someone else," Carlson said.

"It gets to the point where sometimes you wonder who's really disabled around here," said Bill Smouse, assistant director.

Smouse, for one, believes that life without recreation can be life-threatening. "It does add to the quality of living. I'd say it is conceivably necessary to life," he said.

Most adults can plan their own leisure activities and so can most disabled adults. In fact, most of the planning at the Action Center is done by participants. But they need transportation, and they usually require assistance once they get where they are going. Disabled adults also live on fixed incomes, and many fall below the poverty line. Thus they have little money to spend on entertainment.

When the center took six adults to a Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra performance last week, staff members and volunteers picked participants up at home and returned them home afterward because transport service is only available on Tuesday evenings. Because one woman's health aide had already gone for the night, it was up to volunteers to help her into bed.

The cost of that kind of care is "astronomical," according to Carlson, and staff salaries are the program's biggest expense. But even that budgetary allowance is less than \$50,000 per year for two full-time and two part-time people who crank out an average 55 hours of programming each week.

Action Center activities range from craft classes and outings to shows, sporting events and restaurants to birthday parties, pot-luck dinners and more. Swimming and exercise programs are offered every week at city pools and the YWCA.

Functioning also as friends of center participants, staff members at the Action Center are also called upon by participants for counseling and crisis intervention.

They maintain a sunshine fund for in-

cidental expenses, and they keep people fed at the end of the month when the checks are all spent. They take people to doctor's appointments and advocate for them with social services.

"If we didn't have this, we wouldn't really have anything," said Shirley, a participant.

"I get to smell the flowers a little bit here," another man explained.

Ironically, even as the center was faced with closing, Carlson said, its long-term future had never looked brighter. "I feel better about the life of this program than I have for years," she said.

One reason is Lucille Dechaine, whom the Genesee Valley Catholic Charities' office hired this year to coordinate diocesan programs for the disabled. An ad hoc committee from the office's board of directors has also

been formed to help the center manage its short-term fund-raising efforts.

Meanwhile, Carlson anticipates that the center will gain a corporate executive on loan this summer who will assist the staff with long-range planning.

With just one year to concentrate on long-range planning rather than short-term crises, Carlson believes the Action Center's problems would be solved.

Assemblyman Robach agrees that the Action Center's prospects are good. "The state often uses these kinds of things as demonstration programs," he said. "We're working with the (state) Advocate for the Disabled and others, trying to keep it alive and hopefully make it a model that will spread around the state."

Conference focuses on partnership in ministry



Father John L. Heagle and Sister Fran Ferder, fspa, will be featured at the diocesan Spring Ministry Conference.

Men and women as partners in ministry will be the topic of the Spring Ministry Conference, Tuesday, April 29, from 10 a.m.-4 p.m. at the Holiday Inn Holidome, Henrietta. Guest speakers will be Sister Fran Ferder, fspa, and Father John L. Heagle.

Through three presentations, the conference will explore the working relationships of men and women, clergy, lay and religious who make up parish staffs.

Sister Fran, a Franciscan Sister of Perpetual Adoration, has earned a doctorate in clinical psychology from Loyola University and a doctorate in ministry from the Aquinas Institute of Theology in St. Louis. In addition to maintaining an active private practice in psychotherapy, she travels frequently and widely to offer lectures and retreats on human relationships and communication, sexuality, justice and peace.

Ordained in 1965, Father Heagle has earned a master's degree in philosophy from the Catholic University of America and a licentiate in canon law from the Pontifical Lateran University in Rome.

All diocesan ministers are invited to the conference. Registration is \$10 per individual or \$8 per person for groups from a parish or department. Pre-payment is required. For more information, contact Father Jim Schwartz, (716)461-2890.



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